

New York *Says Thank You* FOUNDATION

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600 Delaware Valley High School Students to Participate in Stars of HOPE Disaster Relief Initiative

Delaware Valley High School Alumnus and Ground Zero Lead Senior Superintendent Charlie Vitchers to be Honored for His Commitment to Service and Volunteerism by Milford Mayor Bo Fean

Students will paint Stars of HOPE with *New York Says Thank You Foundation* volunteers
and experience The National 9/11 Flag

May 23, 2012—Milford, PA & New York, NY—Nearly 11 years ago on September 12, 2001, New Yorkers, Americans, and people from across the world came together in the spirit of humanity, compassion, and volunteerism to prove that tragedy truly brings out the best of the human spirit.

For this reason, on May 23, 2012, 600 Delaware Valley High School students will be honoring Delaware Valley High School alumnus and Shohola resident **Charlie Vitchers**—who as Lead Senior Superintendent for the Ground Zero recovery and clean up project was responsible for the coordination of and oversight of all federal, state, and city agencies at the World Trade Center site during the aftermath of 9/11—by painting brightly colored **Stars of HOPE** that will be sent to disaster-affected communities across the United States through the efforts of **New York Says Thank You Foundation**, which was started in 2003 at the suggestion of a 5-year-old boy and has grown into one of the Nation’s leading organizations to transform the 9/11 Anniversary into a positive, hands-on platform for national volunteer service.

At 10 AM, Milford Mayor Bo Fean will be at Delaware Valley High School to issue a proclamation that May 23rd be known heretofore as “**Charlie Vitchers Day**” to honor Vitchers’ dedication to serving the Nation through his work at Ground Zero, his preservation of **The National 9/11 Flag**—which will be present at the event—and his volunteer activities with **New York Says Thank You Foundation**.

About Charlie Vitchers

As Lead Senior Superintendent for the recovery and clean up efforts at Ground Zero, Charlie Vitchers was responsible for the coordination of and oversight of all federal, state, and city agencies at the World Trade Center site and worked with construction companies in the development and implementation of the best methods to ensure the most effective dismantling of the debris field. His time as Lead Senior Superintendent is chronicled in the memoir *Nine Months at Ground Zero*.

Vitchers joined **New York Says Thank You** as the lead volunteer construction manager for the Foundation's annual 9/11 disaster relief build projects in 2006 at the invitation of **New York Says Thank You's Founder and Chairman Jeff Parness**.

Vitchers is also responsible for the preservation of **The National 9/11 Flag**, which was damaged by the smoke and debris of Ground Zero as it hung on scaffolding south of the South Tower in the months following September 11th. By rescuing the Flag from the scaffolding, Vitchers saved a national treasure for generations to come. Through the efforts of **New York Says Thank You Foundation**, the severely damaged **National 9/11 Flag** completed a historic 50-state restoration tour on September 11, 2011, and will become part of the permanent collection at the National 9/11 Memorial & Museum.

About Stars of HOPE

Stars of HOPE is a joint initiative of **New York Says Thank You Foundation** and **Groesbeck Rebuilds America** that empowers youth to transform communities affected by disasters through the creation of colorful and inspiring art.

Hand-painted **Stars of HOPE** include inspirational words, messages, and designs created by children from nursery through high school. These simple gestures transform the physical landscapes and emotional despair of devastated areas into communities of hope and progress. Planted on street corners where homes, businesses, and public buildings once stood, these beautiful **Stars of HOPE** become the community's new landmarks as they sprout from the ground with the possibilities of a brighter future as seen through the limitless creativity and hope of children.

About New York Says Thank You Foundation

Started in 2003 at the suggestion of a 5-year-old boy, **New York Says Thank You** has grown into one of the Nation's leading organizations to transform the 9/11 Anniversary into a positive, hands-on platform for national volunteer service.

Each year on the 9/11 Anniversary, **New York Says Thank You Foundation** sends large groups of FDNY firefighters (many of them survivors of The World Trade Center attacks), along with

9/11 family members, Ground Zero construction workers, New York City schoolchildren and scores of other volunteers from New York City to help rebuild communities around the U.S. recovering from disaster. It is our way of saying “Thank You” for all the love and support Americans from across the country extended to New Yorkers in the days, weeks, and months following 9/11. It is also our way of commemorating the extraordinary sense of kindness and service that united our Nation on 9/12.

About The National 9/11 Flag

Destroyed in the aftermath of the World Trade Center attacks on September 11 and stitched back together seven years later by tornado survivors in Greensburg, Kansas, **The National 9/11 Flag** has become recognized as the modern day version of the *Star Spangled Banner*.

Over 200 Million Americans have experienced **The National 9/11 Flag** through national and local television coverage, public displays in small town gatherings, and major cultural and sporting events. The flag has been stitched by soldiers and schoolchildren who survived the shooting at Ft. Hood, Texas, by World War II veterans on the deck of the USS Missouri in Pearl Harbor, by the family of Martin Luther King Jr., by members of Congress at the U.S. Capitol, and by thousands of everyday service heroes nationwide. **On President Lincoln’s Birthday, a piece of the flag that Abraham Lincoln was laid on when he was shot at Ford’s Theater was stitched into the fabric of The National 9/11 Flag at the Milford Historic Society in Milford, Pennsylvania.**

The National 9/11 Flag completed its journey across America in Joplin, Missouri, on the 10th Year Anniversary of 9/11. The goal of **The National 9/11 Flag Tour** was to display this historic flag at leading venues nationwide, to empower local service heroes in all 50 states with the privilege of stitching the flag back to its original 13-stripe format and to inspire American’s with the flag’s rich visual history in order to deepen our sense of citizenship and national pride and bolster the spirit of volunteerism on the 9/11 Anniversary and year-round. **The National 9/11 Flag** will become part of the permanent collection of the National 9/11 Memorial & Museum being built at the World Trade Center site in Lower Manhattan.

Instructions for Media

Media attending the event at Delaware Valley High School are asked to park at and enter the school at the 9/10 Office Entrance. Media are then asked to proceed to the gymnasium where the event will be taking place. Media are highly encouraged to attend the 10 AM Proclamation Ceremony when Milford Mayor Bo Fean will declare May 23rd “Charlie Vitchers Day.”

Instructions for Volunteers

Anyone interested in volunteering with the Stars of HOPE event should contact Tracey E. Vitchers via email at Tracey@NewYorkSaysThankYou.org or by telephone at 845-699-3879 no later than May 20, 2012. **Volunteers are asked to arrive at Delaware Valley High School no later than 7:30 AM.** Volunteers should park at the 9/10 Office Entrance and register with the secretary upon arrival.

Delaware Valley High School is located at:

**252 Route 6 and 209
Milford, PA 18337**